

PIPES 2016



PROTECTING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE OF PIPELINES AND ENHANCING SAFETY (PIPES) ACT OF 2016

The United States has the largest network of energy pipelines in the world, and it powers nearly every facet of our daily activities. The network includes 2.6 million miles of pipelines, which transport 64 percent of the energy commodities consumed in the country.

Ensuring that pipelines continue to be the safest and most cost-effective means to transport natural gas and hazardous liquids is essential to our economy and our way of life. This is a shared responsibility, carried out in a partnership between the federal and state regulators, and the private sector.

The Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) regulates the safety of pipeline facilities at the federal level. PHMSA's regulatory programs are focused on ensuring safety in the design, construction, testing, operation, and maintenance of pipelines.

PHMSA's 2011 reauthorization of its pipeline safety program expired in 2015. The 2011 Act included 42 specific directives for PHMSA to carry out to improve pipeline safety, but thus far PHMSA has completed only half of them. The PIPES Act of 2016 ensures the agency finishes out the 2011 Act requirements; reforms PHMSA to be a more dynamic, data-driven regulator; and provides regulatory certainty for citizens, the safety community, and the industry.

Improves safety by closing gaps in federal standards

- Requires PHMSA to set federal minimum safety standards for underground natural gas storage facilities, and allows states to go above those standards for intrastate facilities.
- Authorizes emergency order authority that is tailored to the pipeline sector, taking into account public health and safety, network, and customer impacts.
- Ensures that pipeline operators receive timely post-inspection information from PHMSA to allow them to maintain and improve their safety efforts, and ensures that product composition information is quickly provided to first responders after an incident.

Enhances the quality and timeliness of PHMSA rulemakings

- Requires PHMSA to update Congress every 60 days on outstanding statutory mandates, including the status of each mandate, reasons for its incompleteness, and estimated completion date.
- Requests two Government Accountability Office (GAO) studies on the effectiveness of integrity management programs for both natural gas and hazardous liquids pipelines.

Promotes better use of data and technology to improve pipeline safety

- Tasks GAO with investigating how to use technology to improve third-party damage prevention (a leading cause of releases).
- Requires GAO to study the latest innovations in pipeline materials and corrosion prevention technology.
- Creates a working group of PHMSA, states, industry stakeholders, and safety groups to develop recommendations on how to create an information sharing system to improve safety outcomes.
- Authorizes PHMSA to create a national integrated pipeline safety database to have a clearer picture of federal and state safety oversight efforts.

